

PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

August 18, 2025

PREPARED FOR THE LANDMARKS COMMISSION



Project Name & Address: 124 E Gorham Street

Application Type(s): Certificate of Appropriateness for land combination, new construction

Legistar File ID # [87103](#)

Prepared By: Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner, Planning Division

Date Prepared: August 15, 2025

Summary

Project Applicant/Contact: Bruce Bosben, Apex Real Estate Holdings LLC

Requested Action: The Applicant is requesting that the Landmarks Commission approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for a land combination and new construction

Background Information

Parcel Location/Information: The subject property is located within the Mansion Hill local historic district and once the land is combined, all of the project will be on a designated landmark site

Relevant Ordinance Sections:

41.18 STANDARDS FOR GRANTING A CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL.

A Certificate of Approval shall be granted only if the proposed project complies with this chapter, including all of the following standards that apply.

- (1) New Construction or Exterior Alteration. The Landmarks Commission shall approve a Certificate of Approval for exterior alteration or construction only if:
 - (a) In the case of exterior alteration to a designated landmark, the proposed work would meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
 - (b) In the case of exterior alteration or construction of a structure on a landmark site, the proposed work would meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
 - (c) In the case of exterior alteration or construction on any property located in a historic district, the proposed exterior alteration or construction meets the adopted standards and guidelines for that district.
 - (d) In the case of any exterior alteration or construction for which a Certificate of Approval is required, the proposed work will not frustrate the public interest expressed in this ordinance for protecting, promoting, conserving, and using the City's historic resources.
- (4) Land Divisions and Combinations. The commission shall approve a Certificate of Approval for land divisions, combinations, and subdivision plats of landmark sites and properties in historic districts, unless it finds that the proposed lot sizes adversely impact the historic character or significance of a landmark, are incompatible with adjacent lot sizes, or fail to maintain the general lot size pattern of the historic district.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Analysis and Conclusion

The proposed project is to combine the parcel at 124 E Gorham and 116 E Gorham and then to construct a new principal structure at the front of the property that is currently 124 E Gorham. The property at 116 E Gorham is the Brown House, designated a [Madison Landmark in 1972](#). The Landmarks Commission reviewed the project at its May 19, 2025, meeting and referred the project to a future meeting with direction on how to meet the new construction standards. Primarily the commission took issue with the architectural character of the new structure, the visual size, and the obscuring of the historic carriage house. Staff has continued to work with the applicant and the new proposal appears to address most of the concerns. The Landmarks Commission chose not to approve the Certificate of Approval for the land combination at the May meeting

Land Combination

Please see the [previous staff report](#) for a discussion of the standards of approval. Staff still believes that the proposed land combination meets the standards of approval.

New Construction

The new construction has addressed most of the concerns. The building is still much taller than other historic resources on either side of it, but it is stepped back from the front of the property to provide more of a contextual setback and the modulation of the front façade helps to mitigate the visual size. Additionally, the architectural character of the structure now replicates the residential styles found on the historic resources in the vicinity with a mixed roof form, a front porch as the main entrance, and giving space to the historic carriage house from the new construction.

Staff has provided feedback to the project team that the metal railing on the front porch is out of character with railings found on historic resources, and recommended either a wood or composite railing that replicates the appearance of wood. Additionally, for the windows on the carriage house facing the adjacent properties, rather

than infilling them with fiber cement board, staff is recommending spandrel glass that replicates the appearance of historic windows with sashes. There is inconsistency in the renderings between the style of windows on the carriage house: they should replicate double-hung sashes or fixed windows that replicate the appearance of a void for the opening and not sliders.

Additionally, we need specifications for the proposed windows, doors, railings, the fiber cement siding, soffit, fascia, roof venting, lighting, and mechanicals. As this work will require temporarily relocating or shoring the historic carriage house in order to construct the parking structure below it, staff recommends an approved relocation plan before work commences.

A discussion of relevant standards follows:

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

1. The siting of the new construction will expand the ongoing residential use on the larger property in a way that allows the historic resources to retain their historic character in a neighborhood setting.
2. By adjusting the spaces between the existing historic buildings and the new construction, these structures are able to retain their historic character.
3. The new construction uses a similar architectural vocabulary to the historic resources, but will read as a product of its time without creating a false sense of historical development.
4. N/A
5. N/A
6. N/A
7. N/A
8. N/A
9. The new addition is better integrated into the site and the neighborhood context. The new structure nests most of its mass in a way that screens it from the developed public right-of-way. The building is still a full story taller than the historic resources on either side of it, but it is of a compatible height with the historic resources across the street. The new structure and alterations to the carriage house are compatible but differentiated from the historic.
10. While technically the new construction can be removed in the future, it would require relocating the historic carriage house again. Otherwise, this work as proposed meets this standard.

Recommendation

Staff believes that the standards for granting a Certificate of Approval could be met and recommends the Landmarks Commission approve this project as meeting the standards of approval with the following conditions:

1. Submit final specifications for the proposed windows, doors, railings, the fiber cement siding, soffit, fascia, roof venting, lighting, and mechanicals with modifications as recommended in the staff report.
2. Submit relocation plan for the historic carriage house for its temporary removal and reinstallation once the parking structure is constructed.